

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 24 remain in the application.

Claims 1 through 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over allegedly admitted prior art in view of Neagu (U.S. Patent No. 4,836,736), Jones (U.S. Patent No. 2,656,563), or Holzhauser et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,520,977). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The Background of the Invention section of the present application discloses an example of a wood chipper such as in U.S. Patent No. 5,988,539 to Morey. In this patent, the wood chipper 10 includes an infeed hopper 20, feed wheel system 48, and a cutting assembly having a rotatable disc with at least one knife or blade 34 for chipping the wood entering the wood chipper 10 and reducing it to wood chips. Typically, the wood chipper 10 includes an infeed pan pivotally connected to the infeed hopper 20, which is raised and lowered by an operator to allow wood material to be placed on the infeed pan before entering the infeed hopper 20. However, this patent does not disclose or suggest at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator.

U.S. Patent No. 4,836,736 to Neagu discloses a level ride liftgate with ramping action platform. A liftgate 10 is adapted for operative attachment to a truck 20. The liftgate 10 includes a main frame 12 and a foldable platform 34. Two pairs of plates 178, 180 project from the platform 34. Corresponding pairs of plates 176 are operatively attached to the main frame 12 and are disposed near the plates 178, 180. A coaxial hole is formed through each group of plates 176, 178, 180, and a pin 72 extends through each coaxial hole such that the platform 34 is pivotally attached to the frame 12. A torsion spring 186 is disposed about each

pin 72 to thereby counterbalance the weight of the platform 34. Neagu '736 does not disclose or suggest at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator.

U.S. Patent No. 2,656,563 to Jones discloses a counterbalanced hinge. The hinge has two hinged members 10, 12. The hinged members 10, 12 are pivotally joined by a pintle 20. A supplemental lever 19 is attached to the hinged member 12 and is also pivotally supported by the pintle 20. The lever 19 includes a cam surface 18. A bracket 13 is disposed below the cam surface 18 of the lever 19. A tube member 16 is slidably mounted on the bracket 13, and a coil spring 14 biases the tube member 16 toward the cam surface 18. In operation, as the hinge member 12 is pivoted in one direction, the cam surface 18 slidably moves the tube member 16 against the biasing force of the coil spring 14 downward on the bracket 13. As the hinge member 12 is pivoted in an opposite direction, the biasing force of the coil spring 14 moves the tube member 16 upward on the bracket 13 and forces the tube member 16 against the cam surface 18. As such, the biasing force of the coil spring 14 causes the tube member 16 to partially support the hinge member 12 as it pivots in both directions. Jones does not disclose or suggest at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator.

U.S. Patent No. 4,520,977 to Holzhauser et al. discloses an apparatus for mounting a document feeder on a copier/duplicator. A document feeder 10 is pivotally mounted on a copier 12 by a mounting apparatus 14. The mounting apparatus 14 includes a

frame member 24, and a tension spring 72 is mounted therein. One end of the tension spring 72 is attached to the frame member 24, and the opposite end of the tension spring 72 is attached to the document feeder 10. The tension spring 72 counterbalances the weight of the document feeder 10 as it pivots. Holzhauser et al. does not disclose or suggest at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator.

In contradistinction, claim 1 claims the present invention as a wood chipper including a movable infeed pan and at least one assist mount connected to the wood chipper. The wood chipper also includes at least one assist member connected to the assist mount and to operatively engage the infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (CAFC) has stated in determining the propriety of a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103, it is well settled that the obviousness of an invention cannot be established by combining the teachings of the prior art absent some teaching, suggestion or incentive supporting the combination. See In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988); Ashland Oil, Inc. v. Delta Resins & Refractories, Inc., 776 F.2d 281, 227 U.S.P.Q. 657 (Fed. Cir. 1985); ACS Hospital Systems, Inc. v. Montefiore Hospital, 732 F.2d 1572, 221 U.S.P.Q. 929 (Fed. Cir. 1984). The law followed by our court of review and the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences is that “[a] prima facie case of obviousness is established when the teachings from the prior art itself would appear to have suggested the claimed subject matter to a person of ordinary skill in the art.” In re Rinehart, 531 F.2d 1048, 1051, 189 U.S.P.Q. 143, 147 (C.C.P.A. 1976). See also In re Lalu, 747 F.2d 703,

705, 223 U.S.P.Q. 1257, 1258 (Fed. Cir. 1984) (“In determining whether a case of prima facie obviousness exists, it is necessary to ascertain whether the prior art teachings would appear to be sufficient to one of ordinary skill in the art to suggest making the claimed substitution or other modification.”)

None of the references cited, either alone or in combination with each other, teaches or suggests the claimed invention of claim 1. Specifically, the Background of the Invention section of the present application merely discloses a wood chipper having an infeed pan pivotally connected to an infeed hopper, which is raised and lowered by an operator to allow wood material to be placed on the infeed pan before entering the infeed hopper. The Background of the Invention section lacks at least one assist member connected to an assist mount and to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator. In the wood chipper of the Background of the Invention section, there is no assist member to assist an operator in moving the infeed pan.

Neagu ‘736 merely discloses a level ride liftgate with ramping action platform having a torsion spring disposed about each pin to thereby counterbalance the weight of the platform. Neagu ‘736 lacks at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator. In Neagu ‘736, there is no infeed pan.

Jones ‘563 merely discloses a counterbalanced hinge in which a biasing force of a coil spring causes a tube member to partially support a hinge member as it pivots in both directions. Jones ‘563 lacks at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed

pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator. In Jones '563, there is no infeed pan.

Holzhauser et al. '977 merely discloses an apparatus for mounting a document feeder on a copier/duplicator having a tension spring that counterbalances the weight of the document feeder as it pivots. Holzhauser et al. '977 lacks at least one assist member connected to an assist mount to operatively engage an infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator. In Holzhauser et al. '977, there is no infeed pan. There is no suggestion or motivation for combining the wood chipper of the Background of the Invention section and Neagu '736, Jones '563, or Holzhauser et al. '977 together.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (CAFC) has stated that in order to properly rely on a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the reference must be analogous prior art, meaning that "the reference must either be in the field of applicant's endeavor or, if not, then be reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the inventor was concerned." In re Oetiker, 977 F.2d 1443, 1446 (Fed. Cir. 1992). "A reference is reasonably pertinent if, even though it may be in a different field from that of the inventor's endeavor, it is one which, because of the matter with which it deals, logically would have commended itself to an inventor's attention in considering his problem." In re Clay, 966 F.2d 656,659 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In one example, the MPEP explains that "a tea mixer and a concrete mixer may both be regarded as relating to the mixing art, this being the necessary function of each." MPEP § 904.01(c).

The Examiner states that the Neagu '763 and Holzhauser et al. '977 patents are analogous arts "since their springs are being used to counterbalance the weight of movable

members.” However, these patents address problems wholly unrelated to chipping wood. Neagu ‘763 addresses the lifting of articles into a bed of a truck, and Holzhauser et al. ‘977 addresses the movement of a document feeder of a copier. Neither the lifting of articles into a bed of a truck nor the movement of a document feeder is reasonably pertinent to the field of wood chipping. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Neagu ‘763 and Holzhauser et al. ‘977 are each nonanalogous art and unrelated to the subject matter of independent claim 1. Thus, the rejection of independent claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based upon Neagu ‘763 and Holzhauser et al. ‘977 is improper and should be withdrawn.

A rejection based on §103 must rest on a factual basis, with the facts being interpreted without a hindsight reconstruction of the invention from the prior art. Thus, in the context of an analysis under § 103, it is not sufficient merely to identify one reference that teaches several of the limitations of a claim and another that teaches several limitations of a claim to support a rejection based on obviousness. This is because obviousness is not established by combining the basic disclosures of the prior art to produce the claimed invention absent a teaching or suggestion that the combination be made. Interconnect Planning Corp. v. Fiel, 774 F.2d 1132, 1143, 227 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 543, 551 (Fed. Cir. 1985); In Re Corkhill, 771 F.2d 1496, 1501-02, 226 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 1005, 1009-10 (Fed. Cir. 1985). The relevant analysis invokes a cornerstone principle of patent law:

That all elements of an invention may have been old (the normal situation), or some old and some new, or all new, is . . . simply irrelevant. Virtually all inventions are combinations and virtually all are combinations of old elements. Environmental Designs v. Union Oil Co. of Cal., 713 F.2d 693, 698 (Fed. Cir. 1983) (other citations omitted).

A patentable invention . . . may result even if the inventor has, in effect, merely combined features, old in the art, for their

known purpose without producing anything beyond the results inherent in their use. American Hoist & Derek Co. v. Sowa & Sons, Inc., 220 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 763, 771 (Fed. Cir. 1984) (emphasis in original, other citations omitted).

As the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit recently noted, “[w]hen a rejection depends upon a combination of prior art references, there must be some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to combine the references.” Ecolochem, Inc. v. Southern Calif. Edison, 56 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1065, 1073 (Fed. Cir. 2000). Here, there is simply no motivation provided in any of the allegedly admitted prior art, Neagu ‘736, Jones ‘563, or Holzhauser et al. ‘977 to combine any of their teachings.

The present invention sets forth a unique and non-obvious combination of a wood chipper having an assist assembly that assists the operator in handling the bulk weight of the infeed pan when it is raised or lowered. The references, if combinable, fail to teach or suggest the combination of a wood chipper including a movable infeed pan, at least one assist mount connected to the wood chipper, and at least one assist member connected to the assist mount and to operatively engage the infeed pan to assist an operator in moving a bulk weight of the infeed pan when the infeed pan is raised to a generally vertical position and lowered to a generally horizontal position by the operator as claimed by Applicants. The Examiner has failed to establish a case of prima facie obviousness. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 and the claims dependent therefrom are allowable over the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

In the Office Action, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 was applied only to claims 1 through 4. As such, Applicants submit that claims 5 through 24 are allowable over the art of record. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request indication of the allowability of claims 5 through 24.

Obviousness under § 103 is a legal conclusion based on factual evidence (In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 1073, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988), and the subjective opinion of the Examiner as to what is or is not obvious, without evidence in support thereof, does not suffice. Since the Examiner has not provided a sufficient factual basis, which is supportive of his/her position (see In re Warner, 379 F.2d 1011, 1017, 154 U.S.P.Q. 173, 178 (C.C.P.A. 1967), cert. denied, 389 U.S. 1057 (1968)), the rejection of claims 1 through 4 is improper. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 through 4 are allowable over the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that the claims are in a condition for allowance, which allowance is solicited.

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